

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT
OPENING STATEMENT FOR MARK-UP
May 4, 2005

I want to welcome everyone to this important mark-up. As usual, we have before us bills that represent bipartisan efforts to come up with practical solutions to real problems. These bills will advance education, protect our nation and others from natural disasters, enhance research and environmental protection and strengthen our economy. Not bad for one morning's work.

And I would add that while we are marking up these bills, we are also working behind the scenes on our portions of the Homeland Security reauthorization bill that was reported out of the Homeland Committee last week.

Let me talk briefly now about each of the bills before us today to save time later.

First up is Mr. Forbes' bill to help minority serving institutions get the information technology equipment they need. This bill is identical to the version this Committee approved last year, and the bill must also go through the Education and Workforce Committee. To move the bill forward swiftly, both sides of the aisle here have agreed to simply move the bill this morning by unanimous consent.

I think the bill will provide needed assistance to educational institutions that are essential to our efforts to develop more scientists and engineers from underrepresented groups. And I think our version of the bill, which places this program in the Department of Commerce rather than in the National Science Foundation, matches the program with the appropriate agency for carrying it out.

Our second bill will be the bill I've introduced with Representative Inslee to ensure that the nation and the world are better prepared to detect and respond to tsunamis. We all watched with horror last December as the Indian Ocean tsunami wreaked its devastation. Much of the death could have been avoided.

We have an obligation to learn more about tsunamis through research, to improve our ability to detect tsunamis and issue warnings about them, and to improve tsunami preparation and education so that we can limit damage and know what to do when the warnings come. This bill will improve research, detection and education and, significantly, sets aside a proportion of appropriated funds for each of those essential activities.

The basis of this bill was the Administration's plan. The Administration is to be congratulated for its swift, thoughtful and comprehensive response to last December's events. We then built on the Administration proposal, following the guidance we received in our January hearing. As a result, the bill stresses and ensures funding for tsunami preparation and education, and we also press for tsunami detection to be integrated, as much as possible, with other earth and ocean observing systems.

Finally, we will take up Dr. Ehlers' manufacturing bill, which the House passed last year. I know that, as was the case last year, we will have some debate over adding to the bill ideas that may be worthy in themselves, but that would guarantee the demise of this bill. I will oppose those amendments, which include authorizing the Advanced Technology Program, a program I have always supported and continue to support. But I want to actually make progress on manufacturing. That's especially important as we enter the budget season with appropriations likely to be more constrained than ever.

And let me say at the outset that I don't want the amendment debate to obscure the broad, bipartisan support for the base bill, which the House passed last year by voice vote – no mean achievement given the political debate surrounding manufacturing last year.

We were going to also mark up the NOAA organic act this morning, but both we and the Democrats have brought up significant additional changes to the bill. We need some more time to talk those through. We will reschedule the markup of the NOAA bill swiftly – perhaps as early as next week.

So let me close by thanking my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their contributions to these bills. As usual, we've beaten the odds and have worked out sensible, targeted, bipartisan measures.

Mr. Gordon.